

VICTORY STR

Story by SGT Brent Hunt and Bill Roche Photos by Paul Disney



(Main photo) CW2 William Knisley looks out his canopy at the other Apaches in his flight while at a forward arming and refueling point in Drawsko Pomorskie.

(Top right) An Apache skims the trees at speed after a flight demonstration at DPTA.

IKELL



VS II WAS THE LARGEST RECENT U.S. TROOP MOVEMENT IN EUROPE.

EXERCISE Victory Strike II brought together some 4,000 U.S., Polish, Italian and British troops, among them soldiers from the 130th Engineer Brigade and 11th Aviation Regiment — both part of the U.S. V Corps in Germany. The exercise also represented the largest U.S. troop movement in Europe in recent history.

But V Corps commander LTG William Wallace said the deployment of troops to the exercise sites, Poland's Drawsko Pomorskie and Wedrzyn training areas, shortly after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, was "business as usual for the corps. It was an opportunity for corps units to strengthen their ability to deploy rapidly."

Geared primarily toward honing rapid-deployment skills, the exercise allowed the corps' attack aviation units to get realistic

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(Left) SGT Joe Toombs, SPC Starsky Hudson and SSG Glen Strobach from the 197th Maint. Co. perform a diagnostic test on a Patriot radar belonging to 5th Bn., 7th ADA Regt.



(Left, above) PFC Curt Garrison races to the top of a building in the Wedrzyn Training Area's MOUT site to get a better view of incoming "enemy" aircraft.

(Above) Air traffic controllers SPC Robin Gonzales and PFC Austin Hicks "work" aircraft in the pattern at Drawsko Pomorskie's airfield.

(Right) SGT Royce Adams gives tips to Stinger gunner PFC Curt Garrison before an Apache "attack."

THE SYSTEMS CAN TRACK EVERY ELEMENT ON THE BATTLEFIELD,

deep-strike training. With simulated close-air support from U.S. Air Force F-16s from Aviano Air Base, Italy, AH-64 Apache helicopters from the 11th Avn. Regt. and 1st Infantry Division flew missions against an opposing force composed of U.S. and Polish air defense units.

Meantime, elements of the 130th Engr. Bde. helped rebuild two schools near the training area.

The September 2001 exercise also introduced "Strike CP," a command

post housed in rapidly deployable modular units. First-time use of the system by V Corps gave the commander and his staff a compact, state-of-the-art "nerve center."

At the same time, V Corps soldiers field-tested new battlefield tracking systems for the first time in a large-scale exercise, said CPT George Walter, plans officer for the Directorate of Training in the 7th Army Training Command's Deployable Operations Group in Grafenwöhr, Germany.

Developers hope the systems will revolutionize training by giving commanders a near-real-time view of all their maneuver units in the field, Wallace said.

The systems can track every element on the battlefield, from tanks, trucks and helicopters to individual soldiers. The result is a highly detailed computer record of events that allows commanders to conduct more immediate and thorough after-action reviews, said William Brian, project manager for the company that designed the system, Inter-Coastal Electronics.



FROM TANKS, TRUCKS AND HELICOPTERS TO INDIVIDUAL SOLDIERS.

Here's how the systems work:

The Collective Tactical Engagement Simulation System tracks the Multiple-Launch Rocket System and helicopters. The Deployable Instrumentation Training System tracks tanks and personnel. Every piece of equipment and every individual is equipped with a tracking device, which sends a radio signal to the C-TESS and DITS.

►C-TESS

C-TESS monitors every MLRS and helicopter with Smart Onboard Data

Information Modules. SMODIMS transmit identification numbers and battle information for each piece of equipment. So C-TESS “knows” everything that’s happening with that particular piece of equipment — even the number of rockets fired.

►DITS

DITS, the system that tracks armored vehicles and personnel, can simulate artillery, mortars and minefields. It tracks people via a battery pack and a Global Positioning

System unit attached to a special vest.

Previously, such comprehensive system tracking could be done only at large U.S. maneuver training centers, where repeater towers that transmit the “battle” information are located, said DOG master tank gunner SSG Ron Broulette.

Victory Strike might be long over, but soldiers throughout U.S. Army, Europe, can expect to reap long-term benefits once the tracking systems are fully fielded. □